

THE ROAD TO ARCADY

A story of youth and love and false ambition

In a Fifth Avenue palace where tinsel gods are worshipped and men and women flit like gay-winged ephemera through a gilded life, lived the Gerards, faltering on the edge of the rainbow-colored social whirlpool. Unfortunate deals in Wall Street had cut huge gaps in the Gerard fortune.

Mrs. Gerard, haughty of mien, cold and calculating, saw but one way to retrieve the family fortune and establish her footing as an undisputed leader in society around whom would flock the myriad satellites of New York's Four Hundred. This was to be achieved by having her lovely step-daughter Antoinette marry a man whose connections would be the "open sesame" to the most exclusive circles.

At a brilliant ball given by the Gerards, ostensibly in honor of their debutante daughter, but in reality a subtle, glittering net for a wealthy husband, Antoinette flitted in her flower-like beauty. Pausing a moment at the entrance of the conservatory, she is a smiling spectator of her brother's boyish wooing of Sue Dennison, her dearest friend. Momentarily pensive, she thinks of the man she loves and for whom she has turned a deaf ear to her many suitors. He was her brother's college chum whom she had met two years before and who, since his graduation, had been struggling to make his mark as an architect and provide a home for the girl he loved.

He enters, boyish and eager, and for a few minutes, in a secluded corner, they dream their dream of the future, unconscious of the frowning eyes of Mrs. Gerard. "We must wait, John," she whispers, "still wait."

Another guest at the brilliant social function is Benson Churchill, the middle-aged Wall Street magnet, in whose hands lies the power to ruin

the girl's father. As the one condition for his forbearance, Churchill asks the hand of Antoinette. On the verge of bankruptcy, Mr. Gerard hesitates, then pride and a father's love assert themselves and he tells Churchill that the decision must rest with his daughter.

Confident of his own power, Churchill employs John Hamilton, Antoinette's sweetheart, to draft the plans for his bridal mansion to be erected on a vast estate on fashionable Long Island.

John drafts the plans and at the same time, plans his own modest love nest, which he shows to Antoinette when she makes him a visit at his office.

Churchill proposes to Antoinette and is refused. The indignant step-mother who sees a fortune slipping through her fingers, tries to goad the girl into the marriage.

In the meantime, John learns that since boyhood he has been the recipient of charity from an unknown benefactor; that the income he had thought was his own was none other than philanthropy. Mortified and stung to the quick, he demands that the payments be stopped and pledges himself to repay the money - in the neighborhood of twenty-three thousand dollars. He sees his dreams of happiness with Antoinette vanishing.

Following a heated dispute with her step-mother who steps at nothing to force her into marriage with Churchill, Antoinette goes to John's office and tells him she is ready to marry him at once. Hopelessly, John tells her of his discovery; of the huge debt he has to repay, making their union impossible. She comforts and encourages him.

Having failed in all her arguments to induce her step-daughter into a loveless marriage, Mrs. Gerard suddenly has an inspiration. She will coerce Antoinette through her love for her father. She tells Antoinette that her father has stolen thousands of dollars from Mr. Churchill and only by marrying



Mr. Churchill can she prevent him from prosecuting her father for theft.

Stunned by the news, Antoinette promises to marry Churchill.

The news of Antoinette's engagement to the Wall Street financier reaches John. Soon after Mr. Churchill and Antoinette call at his office to view the plans of their mansion. The constrained manner of Antoinette and John toward each other make Churchill suspicious and he finds an excuse to get out of the office, leaving Antoinette and John together. Standing outside the door, Churchill overhears John bitterly accuse Antoinette of having sold herself for money, and hears from Antoinette's own lips that she loves John Hamilton. He re-enters and takes Antoinette away. Alone, he returns to John's office. Frenzied by the loss of the girl he loves, John destroys the plans before Churchill can stop him.

That evening Mr. Churchill calls to see Antoinette. In revolt at all the sordidness of her approaching marriage, Antoinette tells him why she has promised to marry him. Churchill releases her from her promise and as Mrs. Gerard starts forward in haughty indignation, he beckons and John enters.

Smiling sadly at the two re-united lovers, Churchill tells the girl's parents that John would have been his son had his mother not married another man. In revenge, Churchill had ruined the boy's father and the parents died in poverty. Because of that, he looks upon John Hamilton as having a moral claim upon his money. As a wedding gift to Antoinette, Churchill gives Mr. Gerard the obligations he holds against him.

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